



INFORMATION SHEET

NO. IE-01

DATE : July 3, 2012
CATEGORY : Interior Environment
SUBJECT : Natural Light

SECTIONS INVOLVED : Section 1205, 2010 San Francisco Building Code (SFBC);

INTERPRETATIONS:

San Francisco has limited the use of artificial light by adding an exception to the California Building Code (CBC) that states "Guest rooms and habitable rooms (excluding kitchens) within a dwelling unit or congregate residence shall be provided with natural light *by means of exterior glazed openings* in accordance with Section 1205.2."

CBC Section 1205.2 allows two methods of providing this natural light.

(1) By obtaining it from exterior glazed openings of **Adjoining Spaces** that are open enough to each other to allow them to share additional natural light supplied only to one of the rooms.

(2) By obtaining it directly from **Exterior openings**, opening directly onto a public way, yard or court or by skylights.

Along with other sizing requirements, adjoining spaces used for required natural light must have one-half of the area of the common wall "open and unobstructed." "Open and unobstructed" is to pertain to light only and would allow fixed or operable glazed or translucent openings or panels as meeting the intent of the code in this regard. The opaqueness of the light transmitting material would be judged in the same way that glazing in allowed skylights or windows would be judged.

DISCUSSION :

San Francisco small building footprints limit available exterior surface area for windows. Without the ability to provide required light from exterior openings of adjacent rooms, rooms not immediately adjacent to an exterior wall would become non-habitable rooms. Buildings would have to be designed with large light courts through the interior of the building reducing the number of units and the viability of such projects.

The requirement for openings between adjoining spaces sharing light from an exterior opening is to be "open and unobstructed" and is not clearly defined in the code.

Several cases brought before the Board of Examiners were determined to meet the intent of the code with openings of adjacent rooms that were in-filled with translucent products and were considered open and unobstructed for the purposes of light. The Board of Examiners suggested that DBI resolve the matter for future similar situations. The above interpretation does this. Considerations of any proposed opaqueness are given a starting point above with which to consider.

PROPOSED REVISION TO SFBC AMENDMENT:

There has been confusion with the wording in the exception "*by means of exterior glazed openings*" in not allowing light from exterior glazed openings of **Adjoining spaces**. To avoid apparent conflict, a proposed revision to the SFBC amendment deleting the words "*by means of exterior glazed openings*" is being drafted as follows:

1205.1 Add an exception after the first paragraph:

Exception: Guest rooms and Habitable rooms (excluding kitchens, home offices and media rooms) within a dwelling unit or congregate residence shall be provided with natural light by means of exterior glazed openings in accordance with Section 1205.2, except that borrowed light will be from habitable room minimum 7 feet wide (Section 1208.1).

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Date

Approved by the Administrative & General Design Subcommittee on June 18, 2012.

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